

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 13, and 23.

1. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a contoured, consolidated cellulosic article, having a variable basis weight, comprising the steps of:

forming a loose mat of cellulosic material and a binder resin;

trimming the mat to a preslected height by scalping the upper portion of the mat with a first rotary scalper;

creating a softboard by pre-pressing the mat at a first pressure between first and second platens, the softboard having a top and a bottom surface and being formed in the absence of heat to avoid curing of the binder resin;

machining at least one of the top and bottom surfaces to have a pattern;

and

consolidating the mat between a third platen and a fourth platen at a second pressure that is greater than the first pressure, the third and fourth platens having contours complementary to contours in the mat top surface and bottom surface, respectively.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the forming step is performed by sprinkling cellulosic fiber and a binder resin onto a moving conveyor belt.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, further including the step of applying suction through the conveyor belt to hold the mat to the belt and ensure that the

mat is trimmed to a pre-selected height, the suction is applied during the forming step and prior to the trimming step.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the softboard has a density within the range of about 10 to about 30 pounds per cubic foot.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the machining step is performed along one of a longitudinal and lateral axis of the mat.

7. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the machining step is performed along both a longitudinal and lateral axis of the mat.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the machining step is performed using a second rotary scalper.

9. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein the machining step is performed using a computer numerically controlled router.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the consolidating step is performed under heat and pressure.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further including the steps of gathering the cellulosic material during the machining step, and reusing the gathered cellulosic material in subsequent iterations of the forming step.

12. (Withdrawn) A consolidated cellulosic article formed according to the method of claim 1.

13. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a consolidated cellulosic article, comprising the steps of:

depositing cellulosic fiber and a binding agent onto a moving conveyor belt to form a mat, the conveyor belt being perforated;

applying suction through the conveyor belt, the applied suction holding the mat to the belt;

scalping a top surface of the mat, the scalping step creating a mat of uniform height;

pressing the mat between upper and lower platens at a first pressure to form a softboard, the softboard being formed in the absence of heat to avoid curing of the binder resin;

machining a pattern into the top surface by removing cellulosic material in a desired pattern;

gathering the removed cellulosic material; and

compressing the mat between third and fourth platens, the third and fourth platens having contours complementary to a top and bottom surface of the mat, respectively.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein after the pressing step the mat has a density within the range of about 10 to about 30 pounds per cubic foot.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the machining step is performed along one of a longitudinal and lateral axis of the mat.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the scalping step is performed by a first rotary scalper and the machining step is performed using a second rotary scalper.

17. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 13, wherein the machining step is performed along both a longitudinal and a lateral axis of the mat.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein the machining step is performed using a computer numerically controlled router.

19. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the compressing step is performed using a computer numerically controlled router.

20. (Original) The method of claim 13, further including the step of reusing the removed cellulosic material in subsequent iterations of the depositing step.

21. (Withdrawn) A consolidated cellulosic article manufactured according to the method of claim 13.

22. (Withdrawn) A method of manufacturing a contoured, consolidated cellulosic article with variable basis weight, comprising:

forming a loose mat of cellulosic material and a binder resin, the mat having a top surface and bottom surface;

pre-pressing the loose mat to a first density and caliper;

machining at least one of the top and bottom surfaces to have a pattern; and

consolidating the mat between a top platen and a bottom platen, the top and bottom platens having a contours complementary to mat top and bottom surfaces, respectively, the consolidating step compressing the mat to a second density and caliper, the second density being greater than the first density.

23. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a compressed cellulosic product having a three dimensional surface and a variable weight basis, the method comprising:

depositing unconsolidated cellulosic material and a binder resin on a moving conveyor belt, the conveyor belt being connected to a suction device so that the unconsolidated cellulosic material and binder resin are securely affixed to the conveyor belt and thereby form a mat on the surface of the conveyor belt;

scalping the upper portion of the mat with a first rotary scalper so that the mat has a uniform pre-selected caliper;

pressing the mat between first and second platens at a pressure sufficient to form a softboard having a density between 10 and 30 pounds per cubic feet, the softboard being formed in the absence of heat and moisture to avoid curing of the binder resin;

machining the softboard with a second rotary scalper to contour the surface of the softboard and thereby establish a variable weight basis;

pressing the softboard between third and fourth platens in a presence of heat and a prerssure, the pressure being greater than the first mentioned pressure, the third and fourth platens having contours corresponding to the machined surface of the softboard, and thereby forming a cellulosic product having a density greater than the density of the softboard.